

SEP electoral members speak out on Australia's anti-democratic electoral laws and the socialist program to eliminate COVID-19

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is deepening its campaign against the anti-democratic electoral laws rushed through the Australian parliament on August 26. Behind the backs of the working class, the Labor Party joined the Morrison Liberal/National Coalition government to put these laws through both houses of parliament in less than 24 hours.

The laws threaten to deregister political parties without a seat in parliament, meaning candidates will not be able to run under their party name on election ballot papers. This affects the SEP, along with 35 other registered political parties.

The electoral members interviewed below speak about the attacks on Julian Assange, his persecution and imprisonment and their relationship to the electoral laws. They reference the October 24 webinar, sponsored by the WSWs, entitled “How to end the pandemic” which featured a panel of distinguished scientists and workers who have fought for an elimination strategy to defeat COVID-19.

To join the SEP campaign against the legislation, sign up as an electoral member today.

The SEP spoke to **John Isherwood**, 72, who worked as a tiler for over 50 years before retiring last year following a knee injury.

Referring to last week's WSWs-sponsored webinar, John said: “To have scientists come and speak to workers about the virus is a great thing. We get bombarded with pseudo-science and mainstream commentators take it out of context. The vast majority of climate scientists believe in man-made climate

change and the few scientists who challenge this are always connected to the fossil fuel industry.

“I've been following Julian Assange for some time,” he continued, “He and Snowden are heroes. The Americans launch perpetual wars and the arms and service industries benefit. They are killing civilians. Assange has exposed more information than any other journalist in history. The whole case against him is a set-up, including the criminals they are getting as witnesses against him. The pretext for holding Assange in prison has well and truly expired.”

Joshua Cook, a 21-year-old apprentice auto mechanic in Victoria is an electoral member. He began reading the WSWs this year.

“Over time I've been becoming more aware of conditions in society and how bad it is for workers as a whole,” he said. “I used to work at Coles and the support for workers over the past year has been inadequate in terms of wages and safety. Coles is one of those companies that received JobKeeper and saw increased profits.

“Reading the WSWs shows that the struggles of workers are alike in different industries. The amount of labour needed by large and small businesses to keep society running is immense, but there is no financial or health support for workers.

“No one consistently puts the experiences of the working class into perspective like the WSWs and the SEP does,” he continued. “Politics seems much clearer to me; it helps to express my thoughts. A lot of workers are misinformed about politics especially throughout the pandemic.

“With the drive to get people back into work no matter the circumstances, the government and the media claim the issue is mental health. Obviously, this problem exists but there’s nothing done to fix it. Matthew Guy, the Liberal opposition leader in Victoria often speaks about mental health but before the pandemic he was calling for cuts to mental health services.

“Many workers simply don’t realise how much they’ve been stuffed over the past decade” he continued. “The issue is much broader and its misconstrued, so people think it doesn’t require a collective response.

We can solve all the problems facing humanity, it’s not a case of a lack of money. The submarine deal recently established under AUKUS, for example, is around \$100 billion. We do have the money; they are just choosing not to support us,” he said.

David, a teacher who works in rural areas. “This is a particularly dangerous time in the world. I decided to become an electoral member of the Socialist Equality Party because at the moment we’re only getting one opinion and it’s voiced by all members of the main political parties, right across the spectrum. It’s important to have a reasoned voice to measure other things against and to have intelligent, different perspectives, not just Sky News.

“I was surprised that these new electoral laws were supported by both major parties,” he continued. “I thought that the Labor party would have seen this for what it was: to shut people up. In hindsight, I’m not that surprised because I don’t think either of the two major parties in this country are far apart. The leadership is much the same in both.

“Suddenly we’ve lost rights without any consultation, without any pushback,” he continued. “The politicians are taking the opportunity in a climate where people feel threatened and vulnerable. They are seeing how far they can push the envelope and bulldoze through.

“The shutting down of voices occurs at the same time as they are putting imposts on reporters around the world, people that are genuine reporters. Julian Assange is just the tip of an iceberg. There are multitudes of voices around the world that have been silenced, either in open ways where they’ve put the shackles on journalists or just literally killed the press,”

he said.



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